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DECEMBER 3, 1955

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Info

FROM: MOSCOW

RMR

TO: Secretary of State

SS

NO: 1208, DECEMBER 3, 2 P.M. (SECTION ONE OF TWO)

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BECAUSE OF IMPORTANCE SUBJECT SENDING VERBATIM MEMORANDUM DICTATED BY SENATOR HUMPHREY ON HIS CONVERSATION WITH KHRUSHCHEV WITH RESPECT TO BERLIN QUESTION. SENATOR IS CONVINCED THAT CHIEF PURPOSE IN KHRUSHCHEV'S MIND IN HOLDING THIS LONG CONFERENCE WAS TO IMPRESS HIM WITH SOVIET POSITION ON BERLIN AND TO CONVEY HIS WORDS AND THOUGHTS TO PRESIDENT.

"ON BERLIN. I MAY BE VERY SKETCHY ON THIS BECAUSE IT WAS TALKED ABOUT SO OFTEN ANDA INTERRUPTED BY OTHER THOUGHTS.

"THE BERLIN QUESTION WAS OPENED BY MYSELF AFTER A HINT OR TWO FROM KHRUSHCHEV. AT LEAST THREE TIMES DURING CONVERSATION I TOLD HIM MY VIEWS MUST NOT BE INTERPRETED AS EVEN VIEWS OF DEMOCRATIC PARTY, MUCH LESS THOSE OF GOVERNMENT. I WAS SPEAKING SIMPLY AS A SENATOR HAVING AN INFORMAL TALK WITH LEADER OF A GREAT COUNTRY. KHRUSHCHEV HAD MENTIONED BERLIN AS BEING THORN IN RELATIONSHIPS OF FOUR POWERS. HE CALLED IT A CANCER. I TOLD HIM THAT I HOPED USSR UNDERSTANDS SERIOUSNESS OF OUR PURPOSE IN BERLIN AND THAT OUR POSITION IS FIRM AND FULLY SUPPORTED BY BOTH POLITICAL PARTIES AND BY OUR PEOPLE. HE KNEW OF MY VISIT TO BERLIN AND WHAT I HAD SAID. HE SAID, "I UNDERSTAND THIS BUT YOU MUST DEMONSTRATE SOME UNDERSTANDING OF THE REAL SITUATION." HE REFERRED TO POTSDAM AGREEMENT AND US VIOLATIONS. IN VIEW OF VIOLATIONS, HE FELT THERE WAS NO REASON TO KEEP AGREEMENT OF FOUR POWERS ON BERLIN. THIS WAS HIS EXCUSE. HE SAID HE HAS LONG BEEN CONCERNED OVER BERLIN. THAT IT IS OF NO USE TO WEST MILITARILY THAT THE 25,000 TROOPS IN BERLIN SURELY CAN'T HAVE ANY MILITARY SIGNIFICANCE UNLESS WE SEEK TO WAGE AN AGGRESSIVE WAR.

THAT BERLIN

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THAT BERLIN TO HIM MEANT NOTHING WHEN THE SOVIET BLOC HAD 900 MILLION PEOPLE IN IT ALREADY. HE SAID HE HAD GIVEN MANY MONTHS OF THOUGHT TO BERLIN SITUATION AND HAD FINALLY COME UP WITH HIS PROPOSAL OF A SO-CALLED FREE CITY. HE SAID, "I DON'T WANT TO DO ANYTHING DETRIMENTAL TO THE OTHER THREE COUNTRIES." HE SAID HE FELT HIS PROPOSALS WERE REASONABLE BUT IF ANYONE HAD ANYTHING ELSE TO SUGGEST HE WOULD BE VERY HAPPY TO CONSIDER IT. IN FACT HE WANTED SUGGESTIONS. "BUT IF YOU TRY TO TALK ABOUT GERMAN REUNIFICATION THE ANSWER IS NO. THERE ARE TWO GERMAN STATES AND THEY WILL HAVE TO SETTLE REUNIFICATION BY THEMSELVES." HE WILL NEVER AGREE TO LIQUIDATION OF SOCIALIST SYSTEM IN EAST GERMANY NOR WOULD WEST AGREE TO LIQUIDATION OF FEDERAL GERMAN REPUBLIC AND ITS SYSTEM, SO WHY SHOULD FOUR POWERS USE CITY OF BERLIN AS BARGAINING POINT. BERLIN OUGHT TO STAND ALONE, SEPARATE FROM REUNIFICATION. HE STANDS FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF A FREE CITY. HE VOLUNTEERED THAT HE WOULD SUPPORT OBSERVERS FROM UN TO GUARANTEE NON-INTERFERENCE AND FULFILLMENT OF COMMITMENTS. HE TALKED AT LENGTH ABOUT AUSTRIAN QUESTION AND SAID SOVIETS HAD SUGGESTED WITHDRAWAL OF TROOPS AND NEUTRALITY. HE TOLD ME AT LENGTH HOW MOLOTOV HAD OPPOSED THIS AND HE HAD RESPONDED TO COUNCIL OF MINISTERS AND TO MOLOTOV THAT RUSSIAN TROOPS IN AUSTRIA WERE ONLY WORTH WHILE IF RUSSIA INTENDED TO EXPAND WESTWARD AND HE DIDN'T WANT TO DO THAT. HE WANTED PEACE, NOT WAR, SO WHY TROOPS IN AUSTRIA? A NEUTRAL AUSTRIA WAS ESTABLISHED AND A SOURCE OF CONFLICT WAS REMOVED. HIS PROPOSALS ON BERLIN HAVE SIMILARITY, EXCEPT THAT BERLIN IS SURROUNDED BY EAST GERMAN REPUBLIC AND THAT BEST PROPOSAL WAS FREE CITY WITH NO TROOPS BECAUSE TROOPS REPRESENTED SOURCE OF CONFLICT, AS HE PUT IT, AND ALWAYS OFFERED ELEMENT OF DANGER. HE SAID, "NOW THE THREE POWERS WANT TO MAINTAIN TROOPS IN BERLIN, BUT WHY? 25,000 TROOPS IN BERLIN ARE OF NO IMPORTANCE UNLESS YOU WANT TO MAKE WAR. WHY DO YOU MAINTAIN THIS THORN? A FREE CITY, A FREE BERLIN, COULD LEAD TO THE BREAKING OF THE ICE BETWEEN USSR AND USA." AT THIS POINT HE BECAME VERY FIRM AND HIS VOICE ROSE". SOME OF YOUR MILITARY MEN HAVE MADE STUPID STATEMENTS LATELY -- STATEMENTS TO EFFECT THAT US WILL BREAK THROUGH WITH TANKS IF EAST GERMAN REPUBLIC TRIES TO GET IN THE WAY.

SOVIETS HAVE

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SOVIETS HAVE TANKS TOO, LOTS OF THEM, AND I WARN YOU WE WILL USE THEM. WE HAVE ROCKETS, TOO, AND WE DON'T EVEN HAVE TO FIRE THEM FROM EAST GERMANY. WE CAN SEND THEM FROM USSR, SO DON'T THREATEN ME BY TALKING ABOUT BREAKING THROUGH WITH TANKS. MIGHT DOES NOT MAKE RIGHT. RIGHT MAKES MIGHT. MILITARY ARGUMENT IS NO ANSWER. OUR TROOPS REMAIN THERE (SPEAKING OF BERLIN AND EAST GERMAN REPUBLIC BOTH) NOT TO PLAY CARDS. WE MEAN BUSINESS. UNLESS THERE IS AN AGREEMENT SOVIETS WILL CARRY THROUGH AS SUGGESTED. THIS IS TERRITORY OF GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC." I REMINDED HIM THAT IT WAS NOT, THAT IT WAS A SEPARATE ARRANGEMENT AND HE REMINDED ME THAT IT WAS IN HEART OF GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC AND OBVIOUSLY SHOULD BELONG TO GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC, BUT HE WAS NOT PROPOSING THIS, IN FACT HE WAS PREPARING TO GIVE SOVIET GUARANTEES OF ITS COMPLETE INDEPENDENCE. "WE ARE NOT SUGGESTING ANYTHING OFFENSIVE TO US. YOU CONSTANTLY TALK OF ASSURING FREEDOM OF TWO MILLION BERLINERS. THIS IS MERE PRETENSE FOR YOU TO KEEP YOUR TROOPS THERE. I WARN YOU THIS IS VERY SERIOUS. GIVE US A COUNTER PROPOSAL. WE WANT TO DO AWAY WITH THIS THORN OF TROOPS IN THE AREA AND THE SOVIET IS VERY SUSPICIOUS THAT WEST GERMANY IS BEING ARMED WITH THESE WEAPONS TO MAKE WAR ON EAST GERMANY. I KNOW THAT YOU DO NOT DECIDE THESE AFFAIRS, BUT YOU WILL PLAY A PART. YOU ARE A MEMBER OF THE DEMOCRATIC MAJORITY AND A MEMBER OF THE SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE." I ASKED, IF BERLIN IS TO BE A FREE CITY, WHAT WILL SOVIETS DO TO GUARANTEE ACCESS TO BERLIN, TO GUARANTEE FREEDOM IN FACT, AND TO PREVENT IT FROM BEING STARVED OUT.

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KHRUSHCHEV SAID, "WE ARE PREPARED TO ACCEPT ANYTHING REASONABLE, WHAT DO YOU SUGGEST?" I REPEATED MY QUESTION, "WHAT WILL YOU DO TO GUARANTEE FREEDOM OF CITY -- BY THIS I MEAN ACCESS. WE REMEMBER BLOCKADE OF 1948 AND AIRLIFT, AND WE DON'T WANT TO SEE THE CITY STRANGLER." KHRUSHCHEV SAID WE COULD ENTER INTO AN AGREEMENT TO GUARANTEE ACCESS REGISTERED WITH UN. HE IS READY TO SIGN TREATY WITH US, FRANCE AND UK. HE REPEATED HE THOUGHT IT WOULD BE GOOD TO HAVE PERMANENT UN OBSERVERS THERE. "WE WANT TO CUT THIS NOT WHICH SPOILS RELATIONS BETWEEN THE FOUR POWERS." I ASKED, "DID I UNDERSTAND YOU TO SAY THAT GERMAN REUNIFICATION COULD ONLY COME AS A RESULT OF AN AGREEMENT BETWEEN WHAT YOU CALL THE TWO GERMANYS?" KHRUSHCHEV SAID, "ABSOLUTELY." HE WOULD NOT TAKE PART IN ANY DISCUSSION RELATING TO GERMAN REUNIFICATION. HE SEEKS A PEACE TREATY ON THE QUESTION OF GERMANY. THERE ARE TWO GERMANYS FOR TIME BEING. HE MENTIONED PHRASE "FOR TIME BEING" FOUR TIMES. "ANY OTHER SETTLEMENT BUT AN AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE TWO GERMANYS WILL COME ONLY THROUGH FORCE. AN ATTACK ON GDR IS WAR AND WE WILL SUPPORT OUR PARTNER IN THAT WAR." I ASKED, "DO YOU SEE ANY HOPE FOR GERMAN REUNIFICATION IN THE FUTURE?" KHRUSHCHEV REPLIED "YES. A KIND OF CONFEDERATION WITH AN ALL-GERMAN GOVERNMENT." BY THAT HE MEANT A GOVERNMENT THAT INCLUDED BOTH EAST AND WEST GERMANY. HE SAID THEN, "THERE OUGHT TO BE A WITHDRAWAL OF FOREIGN TROOPS, MAYBE SLOWLY." I ASKED, "DOES THIS MEAN THAT WEST GERMANY WOULD HAVE TO BE OUT OF NATO?" HE SAID, "I DON'T ATTACH MUCH IMPORTANCE TO THIS." THEN HE MADE A SNIDE COMMENT THAT NATO WOULD DISAPPEAR ANYHOW. I SAID "HOW ABOUT THE WARSAW PACT WILL IT DISAPPEAR?" HE SAID "YES, ANY TIME NOW." THEN HE WENT ON

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WENT ON TO GIVE ME AN EXAMPLE OF HOW PLANS GO WRONG - HOW PLANS FOR DEFENSE OR ATTACK SOMETIMES HAVE NO RELATIONSHIP TO REAL SITUATION. THIS WAS EFFORT ON HIS PART TO SHOW THAT NATO HAD OUTLIVED ANY USEFULNESS IT EVER HAD FROM HIS POINT OF VIEW, AND THAT WHILE WE WERE PUTTING OUR FAITH IN NATO SOVIETS WERE WINNING THE ECONOMIC WAR IN THE UNDERDEVELOPED AREAS. HE MENTIONED AGAIN THAT SOVIET UNION WOULD NOT MAKE WAR ON WESTERN EUROPE. "WHY SHOULD WE? WE ARE WAGING ECONOMIC COMPETITION." HE WENT ON TO POINT OUT THAT WESTERN EUROPE WAS REALISTIC AND WHEN THEY SAW SOVIET ECONOMIC PROGRESS IN UNDERDEVELOPED AREAS THEY WOULD WANT TO DO BUSINESS WITH SOVIET UNION. HE DIDN'T DEVELOP THIS MUCH MORE. I GATHERED HIS INFERENCE WAS THAT WESTERN EUROPE LOOKED TOO GOOD TO BE DESTROYED. HE WOULD RATHER PICK IT UP THROUGH ECONOMIC ATTRITION OR BY CONTROL OVER MARKETS AND RAW MATERIALS, THEREBY FORCING WESTERN EUROPEAN ECONOMIES TO BEND TOWARD SOVIET UNION. THAT IS JUST MY PERSONAL ANALYSIS OF WHAT HE WAS TALKING ABOUT. HIS REFERENCE TO NATO BEING OUTMODED OR THE WRONG KIND OF DEFENSE RELATED TO HIS PARTICIPATION IN DEFENSE OF KHARKOV, WHERE RUSSIANS HAD PREPARED SERIES OF DEFENSE LINES AGAINST FORTHCOMING GERMAN ATTACK, BUT GERMANS DIDN'T ATTACK WHERE DEFENSE LINES WERE, IN FACT, THEY WENT IN COMPLETELY DIFFERENT DIRECTION AND TOOK DEFENSE LINES WITH HARDLY A SHOT. "WE WILL ADVANCE WITH OUR ECONOMY, SO WITH YOUR NATO MAYBE YOU HAVE PREPARED FOR THE WRONG ATTACK. WE WILL FIGHT YOU ECONOMICALLY AND YOU SHOULD WELCOME IT." ALL DURING ENTIRE CONFERENCE HE WENT ON ABOUT ECONOMIC COMPETITION.

"KHRUSHCHEV SAID THAT IF WE SETTLE THIS QUESTION OF BERLIN EVERYTHING WILL BE BETTER. "IT IS A BONE IN MY THROAT." AGAIN HE WENT BACK TO AUSTRIA AND TO VISIT OF CHANCELLOR RAAB. HE SAID IF BERLIN IS SETTLED HE COULD ASSURE ME THAT RELATIONS WITH ALL NATO COUNTRIES WOULD IMPROVE. I ASSURED HIM THAT WE WERE REASONABLE BUT THAT WE HAD PROMISED BERLIN FREEDOM AND WE WANTED NO POLITICAL STRANGULATION AND WOULD NOT LEND

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OURSELVES TO ANY DEAL THAT WOULD RESULT IN SUCH STRANGULATION. KHRUSHCHEV SAID, "WE ARE PREPARED TO COOPERATE WITH YOU. IT WOULD MEAN MUCH TO THE SOCIALIST COUNTRIES FOR THEM TO KEEP THEIR WORD. A GOOD REPUTATION IS IMPORTANT." THEN HE WENT ON TO SAY ABOUT SOVIET UNION, "OUR FIRM IS A GOOD ONE AND WE WANT A GOOD REPUTATION. IT WOULD WEAKEN US IF WE VIOLATED OUR WORD OR IF WE LET OTHERS DO SO." (I IMAGINE REFERRING TO EAST GERMANY BECAUSE I HAD TOLD KHRUSHCHEV WE WERE OF OPINION HIS WORD WOULD BE FINAL SO FAR AS EAST GERMANY WAS CONCERNED AND WE WANTED TO NEGOTIATE WITH RUSSIANS AND NOT WITH EAST GERMANS'.) "IT WOULD BE IMPORTANT FOR US TO PROVE THAT WE WOULD NOT STRANGLE THE CITY -- THAT WE WOULD KEEP OUR WORD TO GUARANTEE EQUAL ACCESS TO WEST BERLIN OF ALL COUNTRIES." HE ASKED ME TO TELL PRESIDENT EISENHOWER ABOUT THIS AND AGAIN BECAME VERY SERIOUS AND SAID BERLIN SITUATION HAD TO BE SETTLED -- HE WAS NOT GOING TO BACK DOWN. HE AGAIN ASKED ME "WHAT ARE YOUR COUNTER PROPOSALS, WHAT DO YOUR SECRETARY OF STATE AND YOUR PRESIDENT SUGGEST?" HE REPEATED SEVERAL TIMES "DON'T THREATEN ME." I TOLD HIM I WOULD BE HAPPY TO TALK THIS OVER WITH SECRETARY DULLES AND THE PRESIDENT AND ASKED HIM IF I MIGHT REPEAT CONVERSATION IN DETAIL, AND HE SAID "OF COURSE." AT THIS POINT HE SHOWED SENTIMENTALITY. "I HAVE THE DEEPEST RESPECT FOR PRESIDENT EISENHOWER. I LIKE PRESIDENT EISENHOWER. WE WANT NO EVIL TO THE US OR TO FREE BERLIN. YOU MUST ASSURE THE PRESIDENT OF THIS." HE SAID, "YOU MUST REMEMBER THAT MANY OF YOUR FRIENDS, THE ENGLISH AND FRENCH, DO NOT REALLY WANT A REUNITED GERMANY. THEY ARE AFRAID OF GERMAN REUNIFICATION. USSR IS NOT AFRAID. SITUATION ISN'T LIKE IT WAS BEFORE WAR. US AND SOVIETS NEED HAVE NO FEAR OF A REUNITED GERMANY." THEN HE SAID, "LET'S TEST OUR MUTUAL STRENGTH BY ECONOMIC COMPETITION. IF USSR AND USA ARE ON SAME SIDE ON THIS BERLIN ISSUE OR ANY OTHER THERE WILL BE NO WAR -- ONLY MADMAN OR FOOL WOULD THINK OF SUCH A THING."

SENATOR MADE CLEAR THAT IN FOREGOING WHEN KHRUSHCHEV USED WORD BERLIN HE WAS REFERRING TO WEST BERLIN.

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